



South Carolina Department of
**CHILDREN'S
ADVOCACY**
Advocacy. Accountability. Service.

MONTHLY UPDATE

Department of Children's Advocacy Monthly Update
Connecting with and updating our community

A Message from the State Child Advocate

A relatively small number of children and adolescents in South Carolina have complex mental health and challenging behavioral needs, and their inability to get the help they need in their homes/communities increases foster care entries, involvement with juvenile justice and hospitalization. Part of the Department of Children's Advocacy's broad vision for reform is to promote access and awareness of an array of services that allow children to safely remain in their homes and communities or in the least restrictive, most family-like setting based upon their needs with the understanding that some children will need to receive services in a Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility (PRTF) or other out-of-home setting. This month, I am providing an update regarding our advocacy for a robust array of community-based services. Thank you for the work you do to improve outcomes for children.



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Advocacy Through Collaboration



Grant Application: The Department of Children's Advocacy worked with the Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services (DAODAS), S.C. Infant Mental Health Association (SCIMHA), Department of

Social Services (DSS), Children's Trust, Department of Mental Health (DMH) and the Spartanburg Behavioral Health Coalition to prepare a Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) grant application. DMH is the lead agency on this grant application for the Expansion and Sustainability of the Comprehensive Community Mental Health Services for Children with Serious Emotional Disturbances.

The grant is designed to improve the mental health outcomes for children and youth, birth through age 21, with serious emotional disturbance (SED), and their families. The award for that grant is \$15,030,147 over a four-year period with pilots in Cherokee, Union and Spartanburg counties.

Thank you to DMH and the collaborative work of other agencies! DMH submitted the grant application on February 5, 2021 and we look forward to sharing the results once they are received. If awarded, the grant will be implemented in Cherokee, Union and Spartanburg counties.



Grant Implementation: We are working with other agencies and organizations to implement a grant that was successfully submitted by SCIMHA last August to bring Safe Baby Courts to South Carolina. The State Leadership

Team consists of representatives from S.C. Department of Children's Advocacy, DSS, DAODAS, S.C Network of Children's Advocacy Centers, DMH, GAL Program, Richland County CASA, and SCIMHA, which is the lead agency. This grant is designed to provide intensive support and services for families who are involved with the child welfare system and who have a child or children under the age of three years of age. Safe Baby Courts will be launched in Laurens, Spartanburg and Richland counties.



Waiver Implementation: In July of 2020, the Centers of Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) 1915(c) and 1915(e) Medicaid waivers which identify S.C. Continuum of Care

as the provider of High Fidelity Wraparound Services for eligible youth with serious emotional and behavioral challenges. Continuum of Care is administered by the S.C. Department of Children's Advocacy and currently has the capacity to serve additional youth. There is no waiting list, and Continuum of Care is accepting referrals and applications. For more information about the services offered by the Continuum of Care and the eligibility requirements, visit the Continuum of Care website at <http://www.coc.sc.gov> or contact a representative from the contact list at the end of this newsletter.



Advocacy Through Engagement



Three bills regarding foster care children and the foster care system are pending in South Carolina Senate and House subcommittees. S.221 and H. 3509 are the Extension of Foster Care bills. S.222 and H. 3214 are the Kinship Foster Care Program bills. S. 441 and H. 3567 are the Family First Prevention Services Act Compliance/Children's Code Terms bills. The Joint Citizens and Legislative Committee on Children (JCLCC) prepared summaries of each bill, and those summaries are included with this newsletter for your review.

State Child Advocate/Director Whittle testified in support of S.221 before the Senate Family and Veterans' Services

Committee's Child Welfare Subcommittee on January 27, 2021 and at the House Judiciary Committee's Family Laws Subcommittee on February 3, 2021. She shared, "The procedures outlined in S.221 and H.3509 will not only promote safety, stability and wellbeing for young adults by equipping young adults for employment, education and housing but will also allow DSS to maximize Title IVe funding." All three bills moved forward with favorable votes from both subcommittees.



S 221 - Extension of Foster Care

What the Bill does:

- S 221 **establishes procedures** for a child who is or was in the legal custody of the Department of Social Services on their 18th birthday to voluntarily remain in care **until age 21** which would provide these older youth with assistance on:
 - housing options
 - health insurance
 - educational goals
 - local opportunities for mentors and support services
 - workforce supports
 - employment services
 - services to support the transition to living independently

Why do it:

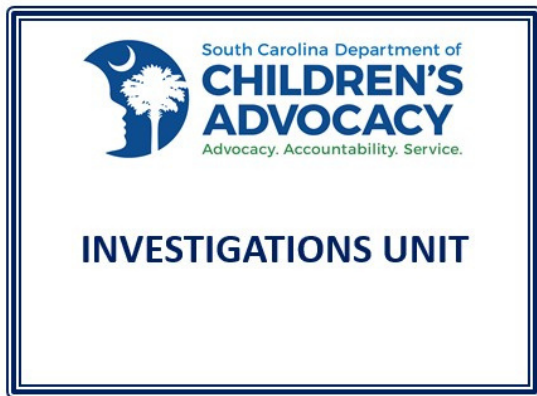
- In the South Carolina foster care system, **the majority of youth over the age of 14 (57%) leave foster care due to aging out** or emancipation .
- **Children that age out of foster care face harsh odds** including suffering from PTSD, failure to graduate high school or college, unemployment, unplanned pregnancy, and even homelessness.
- **Extended foster care achieves better outcomes for youth** by allowing them to be better prepared through the development of relationships, skills, and resources so they can thrive as adults.

The purpose of S. 221 is "to establish procedures for a person who is in DSS's custody on his 18th birthday and has not yet reached the age of 21 to receive services and support to promote emotional well-being, economic productivity, self-sufficiency, connection to family and community and a successful transition to adulthood upon leaving the State's foster care system."

According to the Foster Care Review Board's Annual Reports, 300 youth left foster care through emancipation in 2019; 285 left through emancipation in 2018; and 253 left through aging out in 2017. All three bills are transformative for South Carolina and they represent practical, prudent and progressive change to our state's current practices. For more information about JCLCC, visit their website at <http://www.sc.edu/jclcc/> and to review the complete Annual Reports of the Foster Care Review Board, visit their website at <http://www.fcrb.gov>.

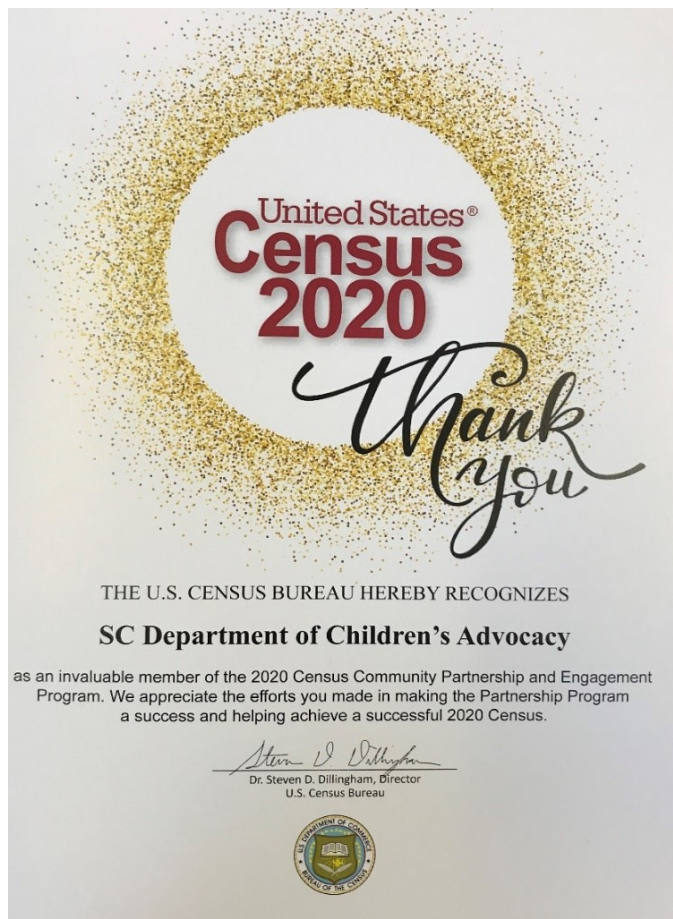


Advocacy Through Awareness



Pursuant to statute, the Department of Children's Advocacy (DCA) has an Investigations Unit which is responsible for receiving, referring, and/or investigating complaints concerning services provided to children by nine state agencies. Many of the complaints include requests or referrals for resources.

DCA has created a resource library to promote access and awareness of services provided by state agencies, and we look forward to sharing the launch with you in the coming weeks once testing is complete.



Dr. Steven D. Dillingham, Director of the United States Census Bureau, issued a certificate in recognition of the S.C. Department of Children's Advocacy's invaluable membership on the 2020 Census Community Partnership and Engagement Program.

In October 2019, the Department of Children's Advocacy (DCA) joined Lieutenant Governor Pamela Evette and other state agencies and community organizations to serve on the Governor's Complete Count Committee.

Since joining the Complete Count committee, DCA has continued to broaden its methods of providing education and awareness to issues that affect resources for South Carolina's children.

The Census Bureau extended their appreciation for the efforts made by DCA to achieve a successful 2020 Census.



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Growing a Community Where Children Thrive